

EXERCISE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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TO Department of State

EO 11652: XGDS 2

TAGS: PINS, GT

FROM Amembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT INTERNAL SECURITY: Monthly Report of Incidents of Political Violence, August 1974

REF

SUMMARY: The number of press-reported incidents of political violence edged up from the 41-incident lows of June and July to a total of 51 during August. There was only one reported incident, however, involving or directed at a high government official, and the level of incidents whose perpetrators are known was extremely low. Several of the incidents appeared to represent the settling of local political disputes through resort to violent action. Major incidents included the murder of a local-level DCG leader's son, the murder of a FAR member's driver, and the shots fired at the home of the Chairman of the Congressional Finance Committee. Activity attributed to the Left consisted solely of the distribution of propaganda leaflets in Villa Nueva and in Escuintla. In the area of non-political violence, the GOG received a good deal of bad publicity over gunplay engaged in by its supporters, and police continued their effort to bring the non-political violence in Izabal under control.

END SUMMARY.

I. Statistics: The 51 incidents of a possible political nature reported by the press in August represent an increase from the level of 41 incidents per month reported in June and July. Nevertheless, the number of incidents that can be attributed to one side or the other was only six (12% of the total). Of these incidents, four can be charged to the GOG or rightist political elements, and two can be charged to leftist subversives. Only

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☐ In ☐ Out

1: Thompson:jcp

POL-1:WThomas
LAO:Col.McTaggart

POL:Jones
DCM:GRandrews

Contents and Classification Approved by:
Ambassador

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *[Signature]* DATE *2 Oct 1974*
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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three of these incidents, however, resulted in bloodshed. The incidents reported this month included twenty-six killings, one disappearance, one kidnapping, two cases of arson and one case of sabotage. Twenty-one of the incidents (40 per cent) took place in Guatemala Department. August's victims included the son of a local DCG leader, a local policeman, an ex-detective, and a radio technician.

Comment: The August level of 51 incidents represents the fifth lowest number of incidents over the past 14 months (July 1973 to August 1974). The low figure for attributed incidents and the political obscurity of most of the reported victims militates against a conclusion that there has been a pro-violence decision adopted by either the GOG or the Left. The oft-announced GOG intention to refrain from dealing summarily with alleged political subversives was put into practice at least once this month (see below). End Comment.

II. Attributed Incidents:

To the Left: On the afternoon of August 29, two men in plain clothes who identified themselves as "confidential agents" of the police arrested Jose Luis Peña Soberanis in Escuintla. Press accounts originally listed the arrest as a kidnapping, but the next day the police reported that Peña was being held for violations of the law for the defense of democratic institutions. He had allegedly distributed subversive literature among the market's stall-holders and urged other persons to strike.

The other incident attributed to the Left is the distribution of thousands of subversive leaflets in Villa Nueva the night of August 24. The leaflets were identified in press reports as from a "clandestine organization which has operated in the country for many years."

Comment: Government admission that it has arrested Peña Soberanis followed the precedent (or the break with precedent) established in July, when the GOG had admitted it was holding former AEU leader Orantes Tróccoli. The distribution of subversive leaflets in Villa Nueva may have been made in an effort to take advantage of the instability that exists there (see below). End Comment.

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to the Right: Three of the four incidents attributable to GOG operatives or rightist elements this month resulted in bloodshed. The first was the killing of Jose Luis Gonzalez Rodas, a former policia militar ambulante turned driver for a FAR member. His body was found August 5 near Mixco, after anonymous phone calls informed the authorities where he could be found.

The second killing [REDACTED] was that of an ex-detective whose body was found on a garbage heap near Puerto Barrios. [REDACTED]

The third killing attributable to pro-Government forces this month was the August 25 killing of the 17-year-old son of a local DCG leader in Siquinalá, Escuintla. An attempt to kidnap both father and son went awry, but the son was killed anyway.

One other incident worthy of note occurred on the night of August 26, when several shots were fired at the home of Rodrigo Valladares Molina, Chairman of the Congressional Finance Committee. Responsibility for this incident may lie with rightist political groups unhappy with the GOG's tax reform package. No one was wounded in the incident, which took place when Valladares was not at home. The shooting incident probably was a warning to Valladares Molina and not a serious attempt to kill him.

III. Other Incidents: While the settling-in process taking place at the national level has been fairly peaceful, at the local level things have not been quite so calm. The alcalde of San José Acatempa, Jutiapa was shot at August 27 by several men but escaped unharmed. Earlier in the month, however, his primer regidor had not been quite so fortunate, for he had died from eight wounds he received when he was gunned down in front of his family.

A similar period of adjustment is taking place in Villa Nueva, a town outside Guatemala City. On August 18 a local policeman who was a confidant of the present Mayor was killed by unknowns, while on the last day of August an unidentified man appeared outside the Villa Nueva police station with a serious gunshot wound in the abdomen. The Villa Nueva shootings reportedly are the result of a serious dispute between the present Mayor of Villa Nueva and his predecessor over how much of a cut the new Mayor will get from the funds stolen by the previous mayor.

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Two non-incidents should be mentioned here. It was earlier reported (Guatemala A-147) that the press had rumored the kidnapping of the son of a close presidential advisor. It has since been determined that the story was a fabrication, dreamed up by a reporter on one of the radioperiodicos and later picked up by the newspapers.

The other non-incident was the August 26 phone call to El Grafico warning that the Escuadron de la Muerte would return to action. The call is noted but not counted among this month's incidents.

IV. Non-Political Violence: The GOG has received a good deal of bad publicity this month over the conduct of some of its more trigger-happy supporters. Early in the month two men, one of whom was a bodyguard for a "high government official," was dared by a friend to shoot off his gun in Guatemala City's Central Park. According to police reports, the dare produced the response that he was from Zacapa and "los de Zacapa no nos rajamos," (We don't back down if we're from Zacapa). Whereupon the firing began.

On August 11, several drunken members of the Vice President's security force took part in a violent gun battle in Asuncion Mita, Jutiapa that left four persons dead, one of them the head of the local government-controlled milk-producing company.

Later in the month a man carrying identification as bodyguard for a member of the Government Coalition in Congress was charged with the apparently unprovoked shooting of a man at the central bus terminal. The chief of public relations for the Congress denied that the man was presently a member of the security force.

To top matters off, one of the Coalition's alternate members of Congress, Antonio Ordonez Madrid, shot and killed his girlfriend at her house. Congress held a secret session later in the month to appoint a committee to study whether Ordonez' congressional immunity should be lifted -- an action often studied but rarely taken in similar cases.

In the Izabal area the Government's efforts to eliminate criminal activity continued during August. Some of the members of the criminal band sought by the GOG reportedly escaped to Honduras, and the two governments were reportedly cooperating in the effort to capture the criminals.

CLASSIFIED BY Francis E. Meloy, Jr.
EXEMPT FROM GDS OF EO 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B (2)

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MELOY

NOTE: The "violence graph" will from now on be prepared quarterly.

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